because all of us are very responsible people sitting here, and it is not only my responsibility but also the responsibility of the whole House, Sir, that no wrong signal should be sent to the market. Now, the State Bank of India ....*(Interruptions)*....

SHRI ASHOK MITRA: It has been reported .....*(Interruptions)*....

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: How much has SBI purchased? .....*(Interruptions)*....

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Gurudas Das Gupta, he is quite sufficient to ask the question. ....*(Interruptions)* ... He is quite sufficient to ask the question.

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA: Sir, SBI, other banks, other operators are, as I said buying and selling dollars. There would be days when the SBI would be buying dollars; there would be days, after an hour, they would be selling dollars, and the reverse is also true. It is a market in operation, and the market will operate. I am not controlling the market, this House is not controlling the market; the market has its own mechanism, and the various players in the market will behave in their best interests, and the SBI will behave in the nation's best interests in terms of the exigencies of the market as they develop.

Now, the second point which was made by the hon. Member was in regard to the role of speculators. I would like to assure the Members that while we have current account convertibility, we are still far from capital account convertibility. We are not placed in the same position as some of the other countries are. We are also not placed in the same position as some of the East Asian countries are, bacause, as I said, our short-term debts are very much under control and the kind of one what was created in the East-Asian countries it is just not possible in Indian situation, and, therefore, the speculators, to whom I referred, are speculators who want to make a little money in the market on a daily basis, and even if these people mount a pressure on the rupee in the exchange market, the point, Sir I made was that then the RBI will come and will see to it that the speculators are not allowed to play any role, but if the rupee is adjusting in the course of trading, and the adjustment is orderly, then there is no reason for the Government to come in and say, we want to peg the rupee at this level. That is exactly the policy which was abandoned, and there is no desire on the part of the Government to go back to a pegged value of the rupee.

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: Sir, my supplementary arises out of the reply to the main question. The Finance Minister, while replying to Mr. Birla's question, indicated that we need not be worried over the total quantum and the impact of our external loan as our external loan is denominated in 24 currencies and there may be some inbuilt adjustments with the appreciation and the depreciation of various currencies. If I understand that our external loan is around 91 or 92 billion dollars— I hope, I am not sending any wrong signal — I would like to know from the hon. Minister as to what exactly the percentage of this loan is in terms of dollars *vis-a-vis* in terms of other currencies.

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA: Sir, roughly 50 per cent of our loan is denominated in terms of dollars and 50 per cent is distributed to the rest of the currencies.

Telecommunication Facilities in Tamil Nadu

***185. SHRI S. MUTHU MANI : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :**

(a) the steps taken by Government to provide telephone and STD facilities in the tribal and remote rural areas of Tamil Nadu;

(b) the number of telephones/STD facilities provided in such areas of the state during the last three years, year-wise;

(c) whether Government have set forth some targets for these areas; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ): (a) Presently, there are 9 telephones exchanges located in tribal areas and 1032 exchanges are working in rural areas. All are electronic exchanges. All the 9 exchanges in tribal areas are having STD facilities and 889 rural exchanges are having STD facility.

(b) The year-wise information is given in the Statement. (*See* below)

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) All the wait-listed persons as on 31.3.98 in the tribal exchange areas will be provided with telephone connections by 31.3.99, and wait-listed persons as on 31.3.98 in rural exchanges will be cleared by 31.12.99.

Statement

	Description	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98
(1)	New Phone Connections (NPC) given from Telephone exchanges of tribal areas	199	353	194
(2)	New Phone Connections (NPC) given from Telephone exchanges of Rural Exchange	20162	14739	17563
(3)	No. of tribal exchanges with National Subscribers Dialling (NSD) facility	9	9	9
(4)	No. of Rural exchanges with National Subscribers Dialling (NSD) facility	693	719	889

SHRI S. MUTHU MANI: Sir, first of all, I thank the hon. Minister for giving the perfect data. Apart from that, I want to put a supplementary. The fact is that the Telephone Advisory Committee consisting of Members of Parliament, concerning several districts of Tamil Nadu, has not been functioning as several Members of the said Committee have become non-Members due to their defeat in the Lok Sabha. Therefore, the public have no place to lodge their complaints for redressal. I had brought this fact to the notice of the hon. Minister a few days ago. So, my first supplementary, through you, Sir, is what steps have been taken by Government to form or to activate the said Committee.

SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ: Sir, we have already issued a circular to the GMs that all the newly elected Members and the Members of the Rajya Sabha should be contacted and new names should be taken from these Members as nominees and the PCO-STD Allotment Committee should be reconstituted. The circular has already been issued and it has reached the General Managers.

SHRI S. MUTHU MANI: Sir, I have not yet received any communication. My second supplementary is whether the Government has any proposal to undertake any survey to ensure that the STD or ISD booths are allotted according to the norms prescribed.

SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ: Yes, Sir. The norms are as per seniority and there is also a monitoring system. If there is any complaint with the hon. Member, he can give me the complaint. I will look into that.

SHRI N. THALAVAI SUNDARAM: Sir, in Tamil Nadu there was a sabotage

of telecommunications at a particular time, that is, at the time of the Tamil New Year Day. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether she has taken any action against the officers. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether there was a sabotage of telecommunications with the help of the State Government during the Tamil New Year Day in 1997-98. (*Interruptions*)...

SHRI V.P. DURAISAMY: Sir, what is this? (*Interruptions*)...

SHRI N. THALAVAI SUNDARAM: Why do you shout? (*Interruptions*)... It is my question. (*Interruptions*)...

SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN: Sir, what is this? (*Interruptions*)...

SHRI N. THALAVAI SUNDARAM: It is my question. (*Interruptions*)... Are you the Minister? (*Interruptions*)... You are not the Minister. (*Interruptions*)... Why should he shout? (*Interruptions*)... It is my question. (*Interruptions*)...

SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN: How can he say all this, Sir? (*Interruptions*)...

SHRI V.P. DURAISAMY: Sir, what is this? (*Interruptions*)...

SHRI N. THALAVAI SUNDARAM: You are not the Minister. It is my question. (*Interruptions*)...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please sit down. (*Interruptions*)...

SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN: He says that the State Government had sabotaged the telecommunications line. He has used very strong words. (*Interruptions*)...

SHRI N. THALAVAI SUNDARAM: You can put a supplementary. (*Interruptions*)... You can put a supplementary. (*Interruptions*)... You don't reply. (*Interruptions*)... The Minister will reply. (*Interruptions*)... I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether any action is taken against any of the officials.

SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ: Mr. Chairman, Sir, one complaint has been received by me regarding the theft of cables and that too regarding the sabotage of the television functioning and not of the telephone functioning. That matter is already under consideration.

श्रीमती वीणा वर्मा: टेलीफोन सुविधा देने के लिए और एस०टी०डी० सुविधा देने के लिए गांव-गांव में और खास तौर से ट्राइबल एरियाज़ में जहां कि टेलीफोन लाइन्स बिछाना सबसे मुश्किल काम है—उसमें खर्चा भी बहुत है, सरकार को मेहनत भी करनी पड़ती है। तार बिछाइए, ऑप्टीकल फाइबर बिछाइए, फिर रीप्लेस करिए। क्या सरकार वीसैट के द्वारा टेलीफोन सुविधा, जैसे कि कुछ प्राइवेट इंडस्ट्रीयल हाउसिस को दी गयी है, इस तरह की कोई योजना बनाएगी जिससे कि वीसैट के द्वारा बहुत छोटे वायरलैस लेकर टेलीफोन, कम्प्यूटर, एस०टी०डी०, पी०सी०ओ० सब कुछ चल सकता है? क्या सरकार इस पर विचार करेगी?

श्रीमती सुषमा स्वराज: सभापति महोदय, विचार करने की आवश्यकता नहीं है। विचार किया जा चुका है, योजना पहले से बनी हुई है। जितने भी रिमोट एरियाज़ हैं जिनका टैरइन डिफिकल्ट है या जो इतनी दूर हैं जहां तार बिछाना मुश्किल का काम होता है वहां एम०सी०पी०सी० वीसैट के द्वारा ही टेलीफोन दिये जाते हैं या टेलीफोन दिये जा रहे हैं। जितनी भी इस तरह की योजनाएं है—सिर्फ हमको देखना यह होता है कि यदि एक गांव में एक ही टेलीफोन देना है तो सैटलाइट के द्वारा दिया जाना बहुत मंहगा कार्य होता है। लेकिन फिर भी सरकार के सामने यह तवज्जो है कि जो जगहें दूर हैं, वहां भौगोलिक दृष्टि से जाना मुश्किल है इसलिए कम से कम संचार साधन वहां पहुंचाए जाएं। इसलिए मंहगाई के पक्ष को भी एक तरफ रखते हुए हम लोग वीसैट से टेलीफोन देते हैं। इसीलिए एम०सी०पी०सी० के माध्यम से ऐसे तमाम गांवों को जोड़ा जा रहा है। तो मैं माननीय सदस्या को यह आश्वस्त करना चाहूंगी कि इस बारे में पहले से ही योजना तैयार है और सारे हिली टैड्रन्स और दूर के गांवों को एम०सी०पी०सी० वीसैट से ही टेलीफोन दिये जाते हैं।

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question Hour is over.